

**Table 1. North Carolina's Profile  
in Comparison to the US**

	NC	US
Total Population (all ages) in 2000 <sup>a</sup>	8,049,313	281,421,906
Percent of Population 65+ <sup>a</sup>	12.0	12.4
Percent of Population 85+ <sup>a</sup>	1.3	1.5
Percent of persons 65+ who are women <sup>a</sup>	59.8	58.9
Percent of persons 65+ who are African American <sup>a</sup>	15.9	8.3
Percent of persons 65+ who are Latino <sup>a</sup>	0.6	4.7
Life Expectancy at birth <sup>b</sup>	75.6	76.9
Life Expectancy at 60 (additional years) <sup>b</sup>	20.8	21.6
Percent of population 65+ in the civilian labor force <sup>a</sup>	14.4	13.3
Percent of population 65+ employed <sup>a</sup>	13.2	12.5
Percent of population 65+ with less than a high school diploma <sup>a</sup>	41.6	34.5
Median household income for households with heads age 65 to 74 <sup>a</sup>	\$28,521	\$31,368
Median household income for households with heads age 75+ <sup>a</sup>	\$19,307	\$22,259
Percent 65+ below poverty <sup>a</sup>	13.2	9.9
Percent 65+ 100 to 149% of poverty <sup>a</sup>	12.2	10.8
Percent 65+ 150 to 199% of poverty <sup>a</sup>	11.0	10.7
Percent rural farm (total population) <sup>a</sup>	1.0	1.1
Percent rural nonfarm (total population) <sup>a</sup>	38.8	19.9

<sup>a</sup>US Census Bureau 2002, Summary File 3 (SF3).

<sup>b</sup>NCDPH 2002, *Healthy life expectancy in North Carolina, 1996–2000*.

## How Does North Carolina Compare to the Country?

As Table 1 shows, in most respects NC is at a mild disadvantage compared to the US as a whole. While a slightly smaller percentage of North Carolina's population is older, those who are over 65 in North Carolina have a lower life expectancy, higher rate of poverty, and lower average education and income than their national counterparts.

### *A note about age groups*

There is no magic age at which people become old. For many federal purposes, age 65 became the definition of entry into older adult status because of the original Social Security retirement age. The Older Americans Act (OAA), on the other hand, sets eligibility at age 60, and

many agencies and organizations that use OAA funds keep figures for those 60 and older. Because of differing practices among sources of information, statistics throughout this document vary in reporting age groupings for older adults.

In addition to the variability in defining when a person becomes an older adult, factors such as health, employment, and marital status vary significantly among age groups within the large 60+ or 65+ categories. For this reason, this plan often incorporates information about narrower age subgroups (e.g., 60 to 64, 65 to 69). However, there is great variation in the availability of data for such subgroups. Where data are taken from several sources, it is not always possible to match information for comparable groups. This document is consistent to the degree that the content and these varying data sources permit.

## Major Themes

In this first decade of the twenty-first century, the *2003–2007 NC Aging Services Plan* proposes that North Carolina accommodate and respond to the aging of its population, communities, and institutions by focusing on five major themes:

1. Drawing upon the talents and resources of active seniors
2. Enhancing services for vulnerable older adults
3. Valuing diversity while addressing disparity
4. Being responsible stewards by maximizing formal and informal resources
5. Assisting baby boomers and younger generations to prepare well for their future.

### *Drawing upon the talents and resources of active seniors*

One of the most important legacies of the twentieth century was the extension of life expectancies. In 1900, a 20-year-old had only a 50 percent chance of surviving to age 65 and, having made it that far, had those same odds of living 11.7 years more (Institute for Research on Women and Gender [IRWG] 2002). Today, in North Carolina the average 20-year-old has a 50 percent chance of living to be almost 77 years old (76.8), while a 65-year-old has the same odds of living 17.1 more years (NCDPH 2002). However, North Carolina still has a somewhat